

# Threatened and Endangered Species in Forests of Wisconsin

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# BALD EAGLE

*(Haliaeetus leucocephalus)*

**Federal Status: Threatened**

**State Status : De-listed**



**Description:** Adult bald eagles have dark brown bodies and wings contrasting with the familiar white head, neck, and tail feathers. The adult female (34-43 inches long) is larger than the male (30-35 inches long). The eagle's wingspan is 7 feet, with adults weighing 8-14 pounds. Immature eagles are dark brown with splatterings of white on the underwings and tail. Their head and tail feathers turn white as they approach 4 to 5 years old.

**Habitat:** In Wisconsin, eagles are found along rivers and lakes where they catch and eat fish

and other prey. They will also eat dead animals along lake and river shores as well as in agricultural fields and on roadsides. Bald eagles nest in large trees, usually near water. These nests usually are located near the tops of the tallest trees and are added to and reused year after year.

**Forestry Considerations:** Eagles are very sensitive to disturbance by human beings, especially during the breeding and nesting season (February 15 to August 15).

*Within 330 feet of a nest*, major habitat changes should be avoided including timber harvest, land clearing, building and road or trail construction. Mature live and dead trees should be maintained for perches and protection from the wind. Human activity should be avoided from March 15 to July 15, and kept to a minimum from July 16 to August 15.

*Within 330 to 660 feet of a nest*, human activity should be kept to a minimum from March 15 to July 15. From July 16 to August 15, moderately disturbing activities, such as hunting, fishing, and hiking, are possible. Heavier disturbance, including harvest and road building, should be conducted during the remainder of the year.

*Within 660 feet to 1/4 mile of a nest*, bald eagle roosts or feeding sites should be protected. If timber cutting occurs, it is suggested that



several supercanopy pine trees be left for future nest tree replacement. Ideally, activities that are within sight of eagles on their nest should be conducted outside of the breeding and nesting season.

*Land within 90 feet of the shoreline* of rivers and lakes should be managed to promote large white pines. As many large dead trees as possible should be left standing, especially trees with a diameter of >12 inches, for use as perch trees.

